

## Reciprocity within Community: Ancient and Contemporary Challenges to and Opportunities for Civic Friendship

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### **Amos 8:4-6 (NRSV)**

*Hear this, you that trample on the needy,  
and bring to ruin the poor of the land,  
saying, "When will the new moon be over  
so that we may sell grain;  
and the sabbath,  
so that we may offer wheat for sale?  
We will make the ephah small and the shekel great,  
and practice deceit with false balances,  
buying the poor for silver  
and the needy for a pair of sandals,  
and selling the sweepings of the wheat."*

**H**OW ARE PEOPLE TO TREAT EACH OTHER when it comes to contexts of civic discourse and civic practice? What might an approach that combines biblical interpretation and practical theology contribute to our understanding of community members' obligations towards one another and the ideals that are to inform and guide relationships? This article brings an ancient oracle into dialogue with contemporary contexts as it considers what Amos 8:4–6, within its context and in dialogue with Deuteronomy, implies for contemporary understandings of community relationships, with similarities in power dynamics providing the basis for an analogy between ancient and contemporary contexts. Through the research summarized within this article, I find that relationships within communities are to be characterized by genuine reciprocity and civic friendship. Within covenantal communities of faith, this reciprocity is to be grounded in imaging a befriending God. I begin with a brief discussion of this terminology of reciprocity and friendship before providing an overview of the essay.

The term *reciprocity* is used with different shades of meaning within various disciplines. In some contexts, *reciprocity* refers to material transactions, in other contexts to social norms of give-and-take, and in yet other contexts, including this article, to both. Within this

essay, I draw on understandings articulated by anthropologist Marshall Sahlins, within his now classic *Stone Age Economics*, as well as on the writings of political philosophers. While Sahlins emphasizes that reciprocity implies “action and reaction” between two parties, he further emphasizes that reciprocity does not necessarily imply balance, as in an “unconditional one-for-one exchange.”<sup>1</sup> Rather, reciprocity encompasses a whole class of exchanges.

One form of reciprocity is the disinterested yet altruistic concern for the other party that Sahlins identifies as *generalized* reciprocity. Another form is the breakdown of effective exchange labelled by Sahlins as *negative* reciprocity. Negative reciprocity includes exchanges characterized by the self-interest of those with greater power, as with the forced seizure of land or resources.<sup>2</sup> Between these poles we find *balanced* reciprocity, with its implications of fair exchange and mutuality between parties.<sup>3</sup> Fair and equitable business practices fit within this category. Likewise, the generous currency of “everyday kinship, friendship, and neighborly relations” fits within the category of *balanced* reciprocity; while parity may not necessarily be evident in any one moment of exchange, it becomes evident over time.

Political philosopher Danielle Allen’s description of reciprocity as a practice characterizing kinship, friendship, and other relationships, whereby “parity in the distribution of both benefits and burdens” is preserved over time, resonates with aspects of Sahlins’s *balanced* reciprocity.<sup>4</sup> Further, Jason Heron and Andrew Beauchamp’s explanation of reciprocity as “the social principle and virtue that names one’s capacity to enter into such binding relations with others and thus to place oneself in the position of being able to meet their needs, while simultaneously have one’s own needs met” fits the description of Sahlins’s balanced forms of reciprocity.<sup>5</sup>

Clearly, some that write about reciprocity use this term to refer only to its positive forms, with their glue-like function, fostering social cohesion, and holding society together.<sup>6</sup> Within this article, I use *genuine reciprocity* to refer to these positive forms of reciprocity, both balanced and generalized.

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<sup>1</sup> Marshall Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics* (London: Routledge Classics, 2017), 170, 171.

<sup>2</sup> Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics*, 173, 175.

<sup>3</sup> Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics*, 175–177. While reciprocity and mutuality are sometimes used interchangeably, reciprocity appears to be a broader term. See Janet Ruth Reohr, *Friendship: An Exploration of Structure and Process* (New York: Garland, 1991), 50.

<sup>4</sup> Danielle S. Allen, *Talking to Strangers: Anxieties of Citizenship since Brown v. Board of Education* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 131.

<sup>5</sup> Jason A. Heron and Andrew Beauchamp, “Economic Rights, Reciprocity, and Modern Economic Tradition,” *Journal of Moral Theology* 8, no. 2 (2019): 109.

<sup>6</sup> See also Reohr, *Friendship*, 50.

Genuine reciprocity is integral to friendship; reciprocity has been described as friendship's "basic act."<sup>7</sup> Friendship involves reciprocity in both willing good and doing good for the friend.<sup>8</sup> This is evident in Aristotle's description of friendship as being characterized by reciprocity in wishing for another "what you believe to be good things, not for your own sake but for [the friend], and being inclined, so far as you can, to bring these things about" (*Rhetoric* 1380b36–1381a2). Civic friendship extends this willing good and doing good to the broader community.<sup>9</sup>

Aristotle's writings are key sources for contemporary conversations regarding civic friendship by political philosophers and theologians, including Paul Wadell in his insightful work on *Friendship and the Moral Life*.<sup>10</sup> Yet advocacy for communities characterized by willing and doing good for the *other* may also be found in works authored centuries earlier, by the ancient Hebrew prophets and reformers. Writings from both Amos and Deuteronomy, for example, allow us to ground an understanding of civic friendship in Biblical texts and values, such that willing and doing good for the *other* is extended to the broader community and outworked through a society's constitution, laws, institutions, and practices.<sup>11</sup>

I begin with an exploration of the world behind the text of the oracles of Amos. In the socioeconomic context of Amos 8:4–6, with its condemnation of imbalanced scales, genuine reciprocity emerges as a key characteristic of traditional relationships amongst rural agrarian peasants. Subsequent patron-client relationships can be characterized by *balanced*, *generalized*, and *negative* forms of reciprocity.<sup>12</sup> I then turn my attention to practices, including both the practices of *negative* reciprocity critiqued within this oracle and the practices of *genuine* reciprocity that emerge as community obligations for the Deuteronomic covenant community. I explore the theology inherent within these community obligations and emphasize the imperative to image God through community practices. Within the context of Amos and Deuteronomy, I identify genuine reciprocity as characteristic of the concept of civic friendship. Moreover, reciprocity through *civic friendship* emerges as relevant to a covenantal way of life.

<sup>7</sup> Allen, *Talking to Strangers*, 131.

<sup>8</sup> See also Anne-Marie Ellithorpe, "Towards a Practical Theology of Friendship" (PhD thesis, University of Queensland, 2018), 55, 113.

<sup>9</sup> See Ellithorpe, "Towards a Practical Theology of Friendship," 59. Also Sibyl A. Schwarzenbach, *On Civic Friendship: Including Women in the State* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 53.

<sup>10</sup> Paul J. Wadell, *Friendship and the Moral Life* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989).

<sup>11</sup> See also Sibyl A. Schwarzenbach, "Fraternity, Solidarity, and Civic Friendship," *AMITY* 3, no. 1 (2015): 11.

<sup>12</sup> Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics*, 175–177.

Turning then to the world currently in front of these texts, contemporary perspectives on friendship are recognized as inadequate to challenge current practices of distorted reciprocity, whereby the elite continue to prosper at the expense of the poor. Yet these ancient texts offer new perspectives and possibilities. Within radically different socioeconomic contexts, the dynamics of power continue to allow for negative reciprocity. Thus, the prophetic rebuke and reforming critique within these texts continue to be relevant to contemporary attitudes, lifestyle, and practices, with their encouragement of positive reciprocity, the pursuit of justice, and the valuing of all people.

### SOCIOECONOMIC CONTEXT: THE WORLD BEHIND AMOS 8

Amos 8:4–6 reflects concerns regarding destructive marketplace practices that only worsened with time. There is some uncertainty as to its precise dating, given scholarly understandings that the book of Amos may have been redacted and expanded a century after the initial oracles. Amos 8:4–6 appears to be one of these initial oracles delivered by Amos, announcing the annihilation of the elite of eighth century Samaria. Within these oracles, the polarization of rich and poor demonstrates marked social inequality. Such inequality is indicative of an advanced agrarian society, disrupted by the process of urbanization, and the associated exploitation of peasants. Amos 8:4–6 bears significant similarities to the eighth century oracle of Amos 2:6–8. However, given its placement within the context of five warning visions at Bethel attributed to the second stage of composition, it may possibly be an adaption of an original oracle by a subsequent seventh century editor.<sup>13</sup>

The poor referred to within Amos appear to be oppressed peasants.<sup>14</sup> Peasants comprised the majority of the population throughout these centuries.<sup>15</sup> Given that the peasant livelihood was always precarious, poverty was common.<sup>16</sup> Yet poverty worsened throughout the centuries due to the “interference” of others who sought control over the economic surplus.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Further, as Coote notes, Amos 8:4–6 reflects the more prosaic style of the second stage editor, especially in the “piling up” of infinitives. Robert B. Coote, *Amos Among the Prophets: Composition and Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 93.

<sup>14</sup> William Domeris, *Touching the Heart of God: The Social Construction of Poverty Among Biblical Peasants* (New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 18, 19, 22.

<sup>15</sup> See Carol Meyers, “Material Remains and Social Relations: Women’s Culture in Agrarian Households of the Iron Age,” in *Symbiosis, Symbolism, and the Power of the Past: Canaan, Ancient Israel, and Their Neighbors from the Late Bronze Age Through Roman Palaestina*, ed. William G. Dever and Seymour Gitin (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 426. See also Paula M. McNutt, *Reconstructing the Society of Ancient Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 152, 168.

<sup>16</sup> Domeris, *Touching the Heart of God*, 4.

<sup>17</sup> Domeris, *Touching the Heart of God*, 41.

*Traditional Relationships of Reciprocity*

Consideration of the socioeconomic world behind this text begins with traditional relationships of reciprocity in Iron Age II Israel, where peasants were rural agrarians who relied on the labor of their family and extended family. Socio-economic relationships amongst such peasants were characterized by balanced reciprocity. Agrarian households, the basic unit of production, both economic and social, were relatively egalitarian. As a social unit, they took on various configurations.<sup>18</sup> The household setting was typically a so-called four-room house, with monolithic structural pillars.<sup>19</sup> Within rural contexts, the pillared house could be inhabited by three or four generations of an extended family.<sup>20</sup> Internal divisions within rural houses provided more than twice the number of the rooms of urban equivalents, despite sharing a similar plan. Significant variation in these internal divisions may be attributed to the life cycle of the extended family.<sup>21</sup> Intergenerational living provided for reciprocal relationships over the course of a lifetime. The clustering of houses in twos or threes, with some sharing of walls, indicates use by extended families.<sup>22</sup> Distant kin without immediate family would have been included within the "compound" family.<sup>23</sup> Extended families were needed to survive.<sup>24</sup>

Living in the highlands of Palestine was never easy. Households were vulnerable to crop loss due to pestilence or climate factors. Various forms of balanced reciprocity, within and between households, as well as between households and villages, served to mitigate risk and contribute to survival, along with the shared use of simple yet effective technologies. Such technologies included the iron plough, irrigation, terraces, processing facilities and storage facilities.<sup>25</sup> Various resources, including the processing installation, threshing floor, and

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<sup>18</sup> Household space is social space; many productive tasks would have involved group labor. Meyers, "Material Remains and Social Relations," 429.

<sup>19</sup> Alternatively, the typical household setting could be called a pillared house, given that the numbered designation represents only the ground floor, and some had only two or three rooms on the ground floor. See Carol Meyers, "The Family in Early Israel," in *Families in Ancient Israel*, ed. Leo G. Perdue, Joseph Blenkinsopp, John J. Collins, and Carol Meyers (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 14.

<sup>20</sup> Avraham Faust, "The Rural Community in Ancient Israel During Iron Age II," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* (2000): 19.

<sup>21</sup> Faust, "Rural Community in Ancient Israel," 20. The number of persons within a household would typically wax and wane, with the high mortality typical of the ancient world. See David C. Hopkins, *The Highlands of Canaan: Agricultural Life in the Early Iron Age* (Decatur, GA: Almond Press, 1985), 243.

<sup>22</sup> Meyers, "The Family in Early Israel," 16.

<sup>23</sup> Meyers, "The Family in Early Israel," 17.

<sup>24</sup> Meyers, "The Family in Early Israel," 18.

<sup>25</sup> Hopkins, *The Highlands of Canaan*, 261. See also Dörmers, *Touching the Heart of God*, 79.

storage facilities, were shared within the village.<sup>26</sup> Peasant households were collaboratively effective, despite the challenges of climate, terrain, and soil to subsistence living.<sup>27</sup>

### *Other Forms of Reciprocity*

The development of an increasingly urbanized and stratified society contributed to the reshaping of the household, to different forms of reciprocity (some of which were ultimately destructive), and to increased poverty. Poverty was exacerbated by a variety of interrelated factors, including regional specialization and trade, the development of a monetary system, the acquisition of lands by elites, and various other practices of the non-poor.<sup>28</sup>

The non-poor included the monarchy and the developing upper class. Regional specialization and trade contributed towards greater prosperity for the non-poor in the early decades of the eighth century. These decades seem to have been a period of political stability and strength, during the reign of Uzziah in Judah to the south, and Jero-boam II in Israel to the north. An emerging merchant class was also enriched.<sup>29</sup> Merchants were often successful in challenging the complete control over the economic surplus sought by rulers and governing classes, as they developed skill in the use (and manipulation) of weights and measures. Much of the success of the merchant class depended on such skills, along with market knowledge and familiarity with variations in the quality of merchandise.<sup>30</sup>

Yet regional specialization and trade did not translate into increased prosperity for most peasants. Rather, the pressure to produce crops for the market impacted food available for consumption. Food items that households had previously produced themselves had to be bought at the market, where the poor were vulnerable to the use of false weights. Early peasant markets utilized a system of barter, using

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<sup>26</sup> David C. Hopkins, "The Dynamics of Agriculture in Monarchical Israel" (paper presented at the Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers, 1983), 177. For example, one processing installation typically provided for the processing of the entire village's crop. See Faust, "Rural Community in Ancient Israel," 22.

<sup>27</sup> Hopkins, *The Highlands of Canaan*, 243.

<sup>28</sup> Other factors contributing to greater prosperity for some included the impact of the monarchy, population growth, urbanization, warfare, and exploitation of the legal system. While there is a lack of consensus regarding the timing of some of these factors, there is no argument that all these factors took place. See Domeris, *Touching the Heart of God*, 128–129, 144.

<sup>29</sup> Lenski identifies the merchant class as "a segment of the population whose activities the political elite usually found it difficult to direct and control." Gerhard Lenski, *Power and Privilege: A Theory of Social Stratification* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 248.

<sup>30</sup> Lenski, *Power and Privilege*, 252. However, not all merchants became rich; many remained quite poor.

weights to make payments in kind.<sup>31</sup> Merchants, elite or otherwise, took advantage of peasants by using false measures and weights and rigged scales, and by stockpiling resources to create artificial scarcity.<sup>32</sup> Weighted bars of metal, including silver or bronze ingots may also have been used, as the demands of tribute challenged the limits of this barter economy, with the required conversion of agricultural surplus into luxury goods.<sup>33</sup>

Peasants were subsequently negatively impacted by the development of a monetary system. Its impact was devastating.<sup>34</sup> Silver, in both monetary and pre-monetary forms, made possible the sale of peasant labor and land. While the development of these innovations can contribute towards *symbiotic* relationships between city dwellers and peasants, a monetary economy, developing on top of a barter economy, tends to privilege those who already have economic power, as they exert control over access to money.<sup>35</sup>

Further, money has distributive benefits, as it facilitates the movement of goods, and increases trade and commerce volumes. It also contributes to social control, as it removes an inherent limit on capital accumulation, and thus social inequality. Money allows for capital to be stored indefinitely, for debts to be extended and for loans to provide, as Lenski points out, “yet another instrument for controlling the peasants and separating them from the surplus they produced. Though this was not the intent of those who devised the first monetary systems, it proved a highly rewarding by-product for the privileged classes.”<sup>36</sup>

A system-wide increase in crop specialization had benefits in terms of production and efficiency but also lowered resistance to catastrophe.<sup>37</sup> The relative self-sufficiency of villages was gradually replaced with dependency on centralizing forces and the exchange networks they administered.<sup>38</sup> Whereas some households had the wherewithal to successfully specialize in olive oil and other higher value crops,

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<sup>31</sup> Domeris, *Touching the Heart of God*, 142. Of the two different shekel weights used, one has been attributed to Egyptian tribute requirements, the other to Assyrian demands. Domeris, *Touching the Heart of God*, 143.

<sup>32</sup> Devadasan Nithya Premnath, *Eighth Century Prophets: A Social Analysis* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2003), 159.

<sup>33</sup> Domeris, *Touching the Heart of God*, 143.

<sup>34</sup> Domeris, however, asserts that the development of a monetary system can be attributed to Persian influence and did not take place until the late sixth century. He asserts that it was not until the post-exilic period that the full potential of the market system developed, with the resulting peasant debt assuming “proportions hitherto unimagined.” See Domeris, *Touching the Heart of God*, 145.

<sup>35</sup> Lenski, *Power and Privilege*, 206.

<sup>36</sup> Lenski, *Power and Privilege*, 207.

<sup>37</sup> The production of crops for the market limits the risk management inherent within the production of a variety of crops. See Lenski, *Power and Privilege*, 201.

<sup>38</sup> Lenski, *Power and Privilege*, 201.

other families ended up becoming indebted to patrons, whether village- or city-based. As previously noted, in times of crisis the family, extended family, village, and even other villages were all potential sources of support. However, if these options failed, patronage would then be sought from those who possessed wealth, power, honor, and prestige.

The ideal basis for the patron-client relationship is one of *balanced* reciprocity, through fair exchange, with goods and services exchanged between both parties. This can take place despite inequality in power or status. In what would *ideally* be a relationship of *mutual* benefit, goods flow steadily from villages to urban centers, in exchange for services and specialized commodities. Yet there is evidence that within Israel and Judah (as in other agrarian societies), it was not uncommon for patron-client relationships to lack genuine mutuality in benefits.

The *generalized* reciprocity of altruism was also possible, although more likely to take place between equals. Such altruism was nevertheless to be expected of the monarchy, whose role ideally included care for the most vulnerable within the community. Yet *negative* reciprocity, where effective exchange breaks down and violence becomes a substitute for obligation in the attempt to “get something for nothing,” became all too common.<sup>39</sup> Sometime in the Iron Age, *balanced* reciprocity collapsed, and normal aspects of patron-client relationships became distorted, resulting in the abuse of the peasant-client.<sup>40</sup>

This distortion represents an ethical failure on the part of the elite. Of course, elites may rarely, if ever, have recognized this as a failure on their part, as they continued to benefit from offering patronage to peasants, requiring their loyalty and their surplus (through tax and rent) in return for protection.<sup>41</sup> They enlarged their property and wealth at the expense of the poor and through the perversion of justice.<sup>42</sup> Negative reciprocity may also have been a failure of what we could call *more economically fortunate* peasants, “who chose to set communal standards aside” as they grew in power and themselves became patrons.<sup>43</sup>

Debt to patrons incurred through negative reciprocity contributed to the loss of household properties; many formerly free holding peasants were disenfranchised and “forced into wage labor” as a result of

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<sup>39</sup> Domeris, *Touching the Heart of God*, 90.

<sup>40</sup> Eric R. Wolf, *Peasants* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1966), 16. Cited in Domeris, *Touching the Heart of God*, 91.

<sup>41</sup> Domeris, *Touching the Heart of God*, 86.

<sup>42</sup> Such attitudes and actions are not atypical of other agrarian societies. It is not unusual for a small minority to enjoy significant luxury, while many others are denied basic needs and thus “marked out by the social system for a speedy demise.” Lenski, *Power and Privilege*, 295.

<sup>43</sup> Domeris, *Touching the Heart of God*, 91.

the loss of property.<sup>44</sup> Thus, the relationship of rulers and governing classes with the common people was exploitative and parasitic.<sup>45</sup> A parasitic pattern may have been typical of advanced agrarian societies. Yet, as Lenski notes, it does not take much imagination to conceive of a more equitable method of distribution.<sup>46</sup> Exploitative relationships were certainly challenged by the ideals of Deuteronomy and by the prophets. The failure of many patrons to deal justly or humanely with “those who had thus placed themselves in their power” led to protests expressed within various prophetic texts.<sup>47</sup>

### PRACTICES AND THEOLOGY WITHIN AMOS AND DEUTERONOMY

I turn now to consider the practical and theological implications of the protest within Amos 8, in conversation with Deuteronomy. I describe the specific practices condemned and explore community obligations implicit within the condemnations of this oracle and explicit within the exhortations of Deuteronomy.

#### *Amos 8: Oracle against Dishonest Business Practices*

The eighth century oracles of Amos protest various forms of injustice and exploitation typical of a stratified society and condemn practices that destroy community. Specifically, Amos 8 condemns the injustices created by various forms of negative reciprocity in the marketplace, characterized by deceit, dishonor, and the destruction of the independence of others.<sup>48</sup>

Dishonest business practices are communicated through the theme of deceptive weights. Within Amos 8, the theme of deceptive weights is presented in three variations. This text critiques the use of deceptive weights through dry measures (*ephah*) that are too small, counterweights (*shekel*) that are too heavy, and the use of balances or scales that are fraudulent (8:5b).<sup>49</sup> Deceit may have taken place through the

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<sup>44</sup> Carol L. Meyers, *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 195.

<sup>45</sup> Lenski notes that such relationships are not necessarily exclusively so; they did perform the useful function of maintaining a degree of law and order. Lenski, *Power and Privilege*, 296.

<sup>46</sup> Lenski, *Power and Privilege*, 295.

<sup>47</sup> Walter Houston, “Was There a Social Crisis in the Eighth Century?” in *In Search of Pre-Exilic Israel: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar*, ed. John Day (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 146.

<sup>48</sup> Jörg Jeremias, *The Book of Amos: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 147. In the similar passage in 2:7, the powerful grind “the heads of the poor into the dust.” This may speak of shaming, given that the head is a symbol of honor. See Domeris, *Touching the Heart of God*, 115.

<sup>49</sup> Hosea 12:7 also speaks of merchants (or traders) using dishonest scales to defraud (or oppress).

moving of the fulcrum or the modification of the stone sphere.<sup>50</sup> The person purchasing the grain thus pays too much and receives too little.

The hours of sacred time were rushed by merchants “eager to prey on the needy” as they sold grain and wheat.<sup>51</sup> Such prioritizing of business practices over restorative practices is destructive to community wellbeing. Whereas the poor needed the Sabbath in order not only to rest but to survive, it seems that they had become victims of an abusive system that thwarted rest.<sup>52</sup> Similarly, the New Moon, on the first day of the lunar month, was a time for rest, respite, and festivities.<sup>53</sup> Amos implies that commerce was prohibited for both these sacred times.<sup>54</sup> In his commentary on this text, Shalom Paul suggests the indictment is “leveled against those who combine strict ritual performance with daily acts of dishonesty.”<sup>55</sup>

Selling a product of inferior quality is yet another form of injustice mentioned in this text. “Selling the sweepings with the wheat” suggests that the chaff and trash left after winnowing would be re-mixed with clean grain and presumably sold as clean grain. While such practices are always ethically inappropriate, they would have been particularly devastating for the poor during times of famine and drought, when their own grain supplies were exhausted.

The purchase of the poor is also referenced, with *poor* echoing *needy* and a *pair of sandals* echoing *silver*. A pair of sandals may refer to a paltry debt for which people were sold into slavery, or it may be a reference to bribery.<sup>56</sup> Another possibility is suggested by the exchange of sandals signifying the transfer of property rights from one party to another.<sup>57</sup> Regardless of the precise meaning of this phrase, it

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<sup>50</sup> Various weight measures used are depicted in Philip J. King and Lawrence E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 195–198. No two examples that weigh exactly the same have been found. Jeffrey Tigay asserts that while *some* may have been intentionally fraudulent, it is unlikely that *only* weights that were intentionally so have been discovered. Jeffrey H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 235.

<sup>51</sup> King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 353. See also Domeris, *Touching the Heart of God*, 110.

<sup>52</sup> Domeris, *Touching the Heart of God*, 119. King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 353. See also Domeris, *Touching the Heart of God*, 110.

<sup>53</sup> King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 210, 353. Prescribed sacrifices for this event are evident in Numbers 28:11–15.

<sup>54</sup> King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 353.

<sup>55</sup> Shalom M. Paul, *Amos: A Commentary on the Book of Amos* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 257.

<sup>56</sup> Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, *Amos* (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 311–312. Domeris notes that the idea of debt slavery is not explicit in the prophets. Domeris, *Touching the Heart of God*, 112. Bribery is referred to in Sirach 46:19.

<sup>57</sup> Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 312. King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 273. Ruth 4:7–8.

is clear that peasants became victims within an emerging market economy, borrowing to survive, until the point where they were required to give up their land.<sup>58</sup> Ruined through deceptive commerce, with the help of *silver*, the needy became economically dependent and were effectively “bought” by their creditors.<sup>59</sup> This oracle discloses a “multi-layered strategy through which human beings become disposable goods for other human beings as a means of increasing wealth.”<sup>60</sup> Moreover, with its critique of dehumanizing business practices and their implicit contempt for other human beings, this oracle condemns such strategies.

Implicit within these texts, then, is the value of every human being. All people are invested with inherent dignity and should have adequate access to society’s goods for a healthy life, including marketplace justice, food, rest, and the ability to provide for themselves. Treating people with dignity is more important than maximizing profits and is consistent with the assertion of the first creation account of Genesis, that all human beings are created in God’s image. These texts are also in alignment with the biblical call for all to image God in their relationships with those who are *other*.<sup>61</sup>

Unethical and abusive ways of doing business are clearly destructive to community. Thus, implicit within these texts is also the value of marketplace behavior that cultivates rather than destroys community. Marketplace behavior that cultivates community is consistent with the emphasis on solidarity between humans and societies inherent within Catholic social teaching.<sup>62</sup>

### *Deuteronomy: Community Obligations within the Covenant Community*

I turn now to an exploration of the way of life encouraged within the book of Deuteronomy. This book is presented as “a literary account of the renewal of the covenant with God on the plains of Moab.”<sup>63</sup> The social policies within this covenant, which may have been authored over several episodes of displacement, blend political,

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<sup>58</sup> Richard D. Nelson, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 190.

<sup>59</sup> Jeremias, *Amos*, 148. See Deuteronomy 25:13–15.

<sup>60</sup> Jeremias, *Amos*, 148.

<sup>61</sup> See Deuteronomy 10:17–19, 24:17–18, 19–22. See also Leviticus 19:34.

<sup>62</sup> Heron and Beauchamp, “Economic Rights, Reciprocity, and Modern Economic Tradition,” 95.

<sup>63</sup> Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 24.

ideological, and theological thought.<sup>64</sup> Its midsection, the Deuteronomic Code, has been described as “a socially-oriented covenant charter bearing some semblance to a human rights charter.”<sup>65</sup>

Like Amos and other prophetic authors, Deuteronomy reflects concerns regarding a stratified society. Yet whereas Amos proclaims judgment, Deuteronomy insists on reform, advocating for practices and attitudes that promote community. The injustice condemned within Amos is in stark contrast with the practices of justice encouraged within Deuteronomy.

The covenant community is exhorted to be an intentional community that goes beyond the natural community of the extended family. Thus, in *Adopting the Stranger as Kindred in Deuteronomy*, Glanville identifies a sister-brother ethic as central to the social and theological vision of Deuteronomy.<sup>66</sup> The sibling is “the fellow human being.”<sup>67</sup> All then are family, with responsibility to extend protection and care to one another.<sup>68</sup>

The vision of Deuteronomy may also be expressed through the language of friendship. The prophets and reformers were concerned with genuine reciprocity; as previously noted, reciprocity has been identified as friendship’s “basic act.”<sup>69</sup> The reciprocity inherent within friendship may be seen as metaphorically implicit in the Deuteronomic instruction to the covenant community to have accurate and honest weights and measures in their bags and in their houses (25:13–16).

Moreover, within Deuteronomy 10:17–19, the translation of *’āhāb* (“love,” with its implication of affection expressed in action) as friendship is not only consistent with an ethic of friendship but provides its theological grounding.<sup>70</sup> God is described as showing no favor and taking no bribes, thus exemplifying qualities of the ideal judge referred to elsewhere in Deuteronomy.<sup>71</sup> Further, God upholds the cause of the fatherless and widow, *befriending* the stranger, and providing the stranger with food and clothing. In so doing, God fulfils the responsibility of ancient royalty to protect and care for the vulnerable.<sup>72</sup> God’s affection expressed through action is to be imaged by the covenant community: “You too must befriend the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.”<sup>73</sup>

<sup>64</sup> See Mark R. Glanville, *Adopting the Stranger as Kindred in Deuteronomy* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2018), 269.

<sup>65</sup> Glanville, *Adopting the Stranger*, 49.

<sup>66</sup> Glanville, *Adopting the Stranger*, 119.

<sup>67</sup> Glanville, *Adopting the Stranger*, 123.

<sup>68</sup> Glanville, *Adopting the Stranger*, 122.

<sup>69</sup> Allen, *Talking to Strangers*, 131.

<sup>70</sup> Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 108.

<sup>71</sup> Deuteronomy 1:16–17; 16:19. See also Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 108.

<sup>72</sup> See Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 108.

<sup>73</sup> This translation is used by Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 108.

The covenant community then is called to image a God of love, friendship, and justice. The way of life of the covenant community, as depicted in Deuteronomy, is to be shaped by imaging God, as all citizens seek to be proactively involved in fostering the health and wholeness of the broader community. Both being and becoming the people of God are integral to Deuteronomy.<sup>74</sup> Positive reciprocity within communal relations is an essential expression of devotion and loyalty to God.

*Imaging God through Civic Friendship within the Covenant Community*

Essentially, the covenant community is challenged to image God through living out *civic* friendship. Essential characteristics of genuine friendships (whether civic or personal) include reciprocal awareness of the other, wishing the other well for their sake, and practical doing on behalf of the other.<sup>75</sup> Civic friendship includes these characteristics within the structure of society.<sup>76</sup> These characteristics would have been evident within the traditional reciprocity structures of agrarian village communities; the guidelines of Deuteronomy encourage characteristics of genuine friendship within subsequent wider sociopolitical contexts. While discussions of civic friendship are typically traced back to Aristotle, it appears that implicit advocacy for such relationships may be traced back to Hebrew prophets and reformers within Iron Age II.

Civic friendship within the covenant community is characterized by empathy and by the honoring of those who are different or *other*. Israel's own experience of being "displaced persons" is expected to "elicit an emotional response of empathy and kindness."<sup>77</sup> Clearly then, reciprocity may not always be direct or immediate. To use a contemporary term, reciprocity is characterized by "paying it forward," as the community is instructed to befriend in the same way that they have been befriended. The covenant community is characterized by a concern for justice and by honoring and empowering actions on behalf of the *other*.

This friendship is theologically grounded. Within Deuteronomy, loving God with the totality of one's being clearly includes loving the wider community. Having experienced God's redemptive love, the covenant community is to share this love with others, including strangers. The community is to image God in promoting justice, socially, economically, and legally.

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<sup>74</sup> See Glanville, *Adopting the Stranger*, 2.

<sup>75</sup> Schwarzenbach, "Fraternity, Solidarity, and Civic Friendship," 11.

<sup>76</sup> Schwarzenbach, "Fraternity, Solidarity, and Civic Friendship," 11.

<sup>77</sup> Glanville, *Adopting the Stranger*, 220.

*Imaging God in Promoting and Practicing Justice*

Practices of civic friendship that image God within the context of community include various practices of justice. Justice finds its “source and authority” in God and is to be pursued by all members of the community (Deuteronomy 16:20).<sup>78</sup> Both Deuteronomy and the eighth-century prophets recognize justice for the poor “as the foundation upon which the constitution of the community should be built.”<sup>79</sup>

As is evident within Deuteronomy 10:18, imaging a God of justice begins with befriending and helping the poor and the needy. All are to be concerned for the well-being of the community. Yet workable systems are needed to “ensure fairness...and redress situations of unfairness within the community.”<sup>80</sup> The legal system, including the court, is specifically charged with this concern.

Judges are to be elected and trusted by the people. They are to be discerning and wise; they are to judge righteously and pursue justice. All people, and specifically the judges, are instructed not to distort justice (often invoked regarding the needy), not to show partiality, and not to take bribes (Deuteronomy 16:19). Rather, they are to image the God of gods, who is impartial and non-bribeable (Deuteronomy 10:17). The court must specifically protect the poor, as they are likely to otherwise be without an advocate (Exodus 23:6). It is the court’s job to ensure that all, but most specifically the disadvantaged, are able to participate in the covenant community.

Specific consideration is given to the socio-economically marginalized triad of alien, widow, and orphan (Deuteronomy 24:17). The alien is disadvantaged in court, due to not being fully integrated, peer of neither the judge nor of her (or his) adversary. The widow and orphan are without a male head of family to represent them in the court. Being outside the normal social structure of the community, they are easily victimized and can quickly be reduced to destitution.<sup>81</sup> An orphaned daughter would be even more vulnerable.<sup>82</sup>

Within Deuteronomy, providing justice for the marginalized triad is a responsibility of *every* citizen, not just king and court.<sup>83</sup> Both monarchy and community were expected to provide for the socio-economically marginalized (Deuteronomy 14:29), as they imaged God in promoting justice for both widow and orphan (Deuteronomy 10:18). Justice must not be subverted through prejudice or the lack of economic

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<sup>78</sup> Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, 248.

<sup>79</sup> John T. Strong and Steven Shawn Tuell, “Introduction,” in *Constituting the Community: Studies on the Polity of Ancient Israel in Honor of S. Dean McBride, Jr.*, ed. John T. Strong and Steven Shawn Tuell (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 4.

<sup>80</sup> Patrick D. Miller, *Deuteronomy* (Louisville: John Knox, 1990), 142.

<sup>81</sup> King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 53.

<sup>82</sup> King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 53.

<sup>83</sup> Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 292.

influence (Deuteronomy 24:17–18). Rather, people are to be protected from economic oppression that would keep them from securing the basic needs of life. Oppression and injustice toward the less protected or secure members of the community are prohibited. Basic needs of food, clothing, and shelter are to be protected. Accordingly, whereas the garments of others taken as pledge for a loan must be returned at night, if needed, a widow's garments are not to be taken at all (Deuteronomy 24:17), thus avoiding physical suffering and dishonor.

The attitudes and actions of civic friendship encouraged in Deuteronomy are not confined to the poor, but extend to all who are disadvantaged. Action on behalf of others is evident in instructions regarding loans, wages, gleaning, and their impact on food, clothing, and shelter. There is general condemnation of oppression, along with the encouragement of honest and generous religious and business practices that support community.

### *Imaging God Through Practices Providing Protection Against Poverty*

Further, imaging God through the befriending inherent within civic friendship includes providing protection against poverty. Various Deuteronomic statutes were designed to protect people from forms of economic oppression that would prevent them from securing the basic needs for life. These were relevant to the poor, yet not confined only to the poor. Rather, each person within a community was to be protected against acts that would thwart access to essential needs of life (Deuteronomy 24: 6, 10). Prohibitions on injustice and oppression specifically targeted those with minimal or no protection and security within the community. While the securing of basic needs for all is vital, the marginalized triad is given particular attention. Deuteronomy speaks not only against oppression, but also against actions that, while legal (such as stripping trees and returning for forgotten sheaves), remove survival opportunities for the poorest of the poor. Protections include the sharing of tithes with those in need, the prompt payment of workers, and allowing for gleaning.

These practices, along with others advocated for throughout Deuteronomy, nurture civic friendship as they foster positive reciprocity, reduce human misery, and remove the “tyrannical power” of debt.<sup>84</sup> These normative guidelines for community life are designed to foster fairness and to limit the oppressive power of the wealthy.<sup>85</sup>

There is no aspect of human living that is outside of the covenant; there is no area of life that is irrelevant or unimportant to the covenant

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<sup>84</sup> Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 190.

<sup>85</sup> Strong and Tuell, “Introduction,” 7.

community.<sup>86</sup> Further, the covenant embraces “both communal and individual responsibility.”<sup>87</sup>

### THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD IN FRONT OF THESE TEXTS

Despite significantly different socioeconomic contexts, I am convinced that theologically-inspired civic friendship remains relevant to contemporary contexts. Yet living out such friendship will require the reshaping of current understandings of friendship, civic friendship, and community obligation.

I attempt here a possible description of elements of our Western context today. Lenski’s *Power and Privilege* identifies twentieth century Western societies as industrial societies, where personal and class interests continue to be prioritized over community well-being.<sup>88</sup> While twenty-first century contexts are not radically dissimilar, they are further characterized by ongoing technological innovation and by the spread of global capitalism and the neoliberalism that undergirds it. Neoliberalism may be defined as the view that a more or less unfettered capitalist market is “the best and most efficient way for an economy to be run.”<sup>89</sup> Neoliberalism advocates for resources to be “allocated in the most efficient manner” not only nationally but also globally, based on the (questionable) conviction that “trade enhances growth, and...growth reduces poverty.”<sup>90</sup> On the contrary, neoliberal policies have enriched the elite and “rendered the poor far more vulnerable.”<sup>91</sup>

The problem of distorted reciprocity clearly remains. Elites continue to prosper at the expense of the poor. Yet resistance has been relatively muted.<sup>92</sup> With ongoing globalization, corporations have become transnational and thus more difficult to confront. Further, neoliberalism permeates current socioeconomic contexts to the extent that its practices are experienced as normal.<sup>93</sup>

Whereas the implicit civic friendship of the ancient prophets and reformers challenged distorted reciprocity, civic friendship is rarely

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<sup>86</sup> Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, 43.

<sup>87</sup> Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, 43.

<sup>88</sup> Lenski, *Power and Privilege*, 393. Previously “attacks on inequality frequently appeared to be based on an ideological rejection of inequality per se. Today, however, attacks on inequality increasingly reflect a rejection of ascribed forms of power and privilege, but an acceptance of achieved forms” (Lenski, *Power and Privilege*, 392).

<sup>89</sup> Todd May, *Friendship in an Age of Economics: Resisting the Forces of Neoliberalism* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2012), 4.

<sup>90</sup> Jagdish N. Bhagwati, *In Defense of Globalization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 53.

<sup>91</sup> May, *Friendship in an Age of Economics*, 11.

<sup>92</sup> May, *Friendship in an Age of Economics*, 11–12. See also the advocacy for First Nations resistance in Maria Bargh, *Resistance: An Indigenous Response to Neoliberalism* (Wellington, NZ: Huia, 2007).

<sup>93</sup> May, *Friendship in an Age of Economics*, 14–15.

acknowledged within many Western contexts.<sup>94</sup> Further, friendship is seldom recognized as integral to justice. Rather, friendship is currently considered a privatized, sentimentalized, and recreational relationship between equals. Minimal attention is paid to the relationship between friendship and community or to the relationship between friendship and the moral life.<sup>95</sup> The befriending of those who are *other*, advocated for in Deuteronomy, is not widely encouraged.

Within the United States, lack of civic friendship may be seen in the need for *#BlackLivesMatter* and in the lack of understanding and empathy inherent in the retort that *#AllLivesMatter*. Within Canada, the United States, Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand and elsewhere, a lack of civic friendship is apparent in widespread unwillingness by the descendants of colonizers to take responsibility for the actions of colonizing ancestors against Indigenous people through dismantling oppressive structures and through seeking to be rightly related. Lack of civic friendship is further apparent in the harassment of women evidenced by the widespread confession of *#MeToo*.

Clearly the reciprocity integral to friendship that ideally characterizes life within communities is lacking within many Western contexts. This absence of genuine reciprocity fosters discord and division within society, and, as Heron and Beauchamp perceptively note, even influences economic analysis and the advice we derive from it.<sup>96</sup> Without the balanced reciprocity nurtured through civic friendship, self-interest can become divorced from altruism and from positive reciprocity.<sup>97</sup>

Yet I am not alone in advocating for attentiveness to civic friendship. Political philosophers, including Danielle Allen and Sibyl Schwarzenbach, advocate for the recovery of this understanding of citizenship. Further, the civil economy tradition promotes a vision of public happiness and Catholic social teaching promotes a vision of the common good.<sup>98</sup> These alternative traditions advocate for civil as well as personal virtues, and identify love for the larger good, or public

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<sup>94</sup> As political philosopher Sibyl Schwarzenbach notes in her *Huffington Post* blog post entitled “A Failure of Civic Friendship” (March 18, 2010), few recognize friendship as an important civic analogue.

<sup>95</sup> Academic exceptions include Wadell’s *Friendship and the Moral Life*, McGuire’s *Friendship and Community*, and Sibyl Schwarzenbach’s *On Civic Friendship: Including Women in the State*.

<sup>96</sup> Heron and Beauchamp, “Economic Rights, Reciprocity, and Modern Economic Tradition,” 112. Contemporary economists are largely silent in regard to issues of reciprocity. Heron and Beauchamp, “Economic Rights, Reciprocity, and Modern Economic Tradition,” 93.

<sup>97</sup> Allen, *Talking to Strangers*, 138.

<sup>98</sup> The Italian Civil Humanist tradition is often referred to as the “civil economy.” Heron and Beauchamp, “Economic Rights, Reciprocity, and Modern Economic Tradition,” 112.

happiness, as first among the civil virtues.<sup>99</sup> What implications then do the ancient texts of Amos and Deuteronomy have for the contemporary nurture and practice of civil virtues and civic friendship?

*Implications for the Contemporary Practice of Civic Friendship*

There are clearly vast social, political, and economic differences between the agrarian society of ancient Israel, and contemporary Western contexts. How can insights gained from the earlier contextual study of Amos and Deuteronomy be appropriately carried across the great gaps of time and context to the present day? Similarities in power dynamics provide the basis for an analogy between these two radically different contexts when it comes to issues of reciprocity. Within both contexts, power is used by those with more power to oppress those with less power. In both ancient and contemporary contexts, many who are wealthy are guilty of exploiting others and of being anything but reciprocal.

Within contemporary Western contexts, those of us who are not struggling to survive do not think about reciprocity carefully enough. We do not give enough attention to the various forms of power that contribute to oppression. Yet we can learn to pay attention to issues of reciprocity in terms of how we structure relationships. We can collaboratively consider how we might confront inequalities in power, privilege, and access to resources. As people of privilege, and of relative wealth, power, honor, and learning, it is appropriate for us to consider how the prophetic rebuke of Amos and the reforming critique of Deuteronomy are relevant to our attitudes, life-style, and practices.

What implications do these ancient texts have then for the contemporary practice of civic friendship? These ancient texts encourage civic friendship characterized by empathy and by actions that honor and empower those who are *otherized*. Clearly, civic friendship is to be based on a positive and active regard for each person within the community, and recognition of the dignity of all.

From the perspective of personal experience, this regard can be based on shared perceptions of what relations between fellow citizens are expected to look like.<sup>100</sup> Ethically, such regard can be based on “a reciprocal awareness of the moral equality of the other.”<sup>101</sup> From the theological perspective inherent within these and other texts, this regard for each person within the community is grounded in imaging a God who promotes economic, legal, and social justice (Deuteronomy 10:17–18), as well as in recognition of the value of all human beings as *imago dei* (Genesis 1:26–27).

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<sup>99</sup> Heron and Beauchamp, “Economic Rights, Reciprocity, and Modern Economic Tradition,” 98.

<sup>100</sup> See also Ellithorpe, “Towards a Practical Theology of Friendship,” 113.

<sup>101</sup> Schwarzenbach, “Fraternity, Solidarity, and Civic Friendship,” 5.

The Deuteronomic model of civic friendship asserts that justice is to be pursued by all and for all. The legal system must protect justice for all. Those responsible for the formation of institutions and laws must seek to form them in ways that encourage good will between citizens.

For people of faith, the call to image a God of love, friendship, and justice within community contexts remains relevant. These practices of civic friendship are to be grounded in, and to emerge from, friendship with God, a God that is to be imaged in promoting economic, legal, and social justice. Thus, in community with others who have experienced God's redemptive friendship, we are also to befriend strangers and celebrate *difference*.<sup>102</sup> Reciprocity for us also is to be characterized by "paying it forward," befriendings as we have been befriended.

I acknowledge that there is no easy path to addressing contemporary forms of inequity and injustice. Nevertheless, despite contemporary challenges to civic friendship and to genuine reciprocity, I do not believe it is naive to challenge contemporary communities, and particularly communities of faith, to nurture genuine reciprocity through various practices of civic friendship. After all, as Pope Benedict XVI asserts in his 2009 social encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, solidarity and mutual trust within the broader community are integral to the market fulfilling its appropriate economic function. Further, as Benedict also notes, the Church's social doctrine recognizes that "authentically human social relationships of friendship, solidarity and reciprocity" can be conducted within economic activity, as well as apart from or after such activity.<sup>103</sup>

These ancient texts exhort *all* to be proactively involved in fostering the flourishing of the broader community, but speak specifically to a theocratic covenant community. Within the context of contemporary communities, influenced by global economies, democratic governments, and technological innovation (with its potential for polarizing and/or isolating individuals, as well as for enabling interpersonal connection), wisdom is needed in discerning specific ways in which reciprocity and civic friendship are to be nurtured within our spheres of influence.

Acknowledging that "habits are formed, decisions are processed, and choices are made, in the company of friends," I suggest that personal friendships are often integral to this discernment process, as well

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<sup>102</sup> These ancient texts encourage civic friendship between generations (orphans), genders (widows), and ethnicities (stranger, foreigner).

<sup>103</sup> Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, no. 36.

as to the fostering of civic friendship.<sup>104</sup> As Simone Weil, Gilbert Meilaender, Paul Wadell, and others assert, friendship is a school for a broader love.<sup>105</sup>

We may be oblivious to the ways in which distorted reciprocity is built into social relationships. We may unwittingly be complicit in oppression through our purchases, and through cultural appropriation. Yet as friends we can give attention to learning about others as well as reflecting on our own marketplace practices as consumers, networkers, investors, and entrepreneurs. Friends can support one another in considering effective and empowering forms of care for the socio-economically marginalized, whatever work they are involved with, and whatever their sphere of influence.

Contemporary communities are encouraged to demonstrate concern for their fellow citizens through justice in their daily habits, through their work, and through their purchases. Contemporary friends are challenged to promote legislation and practices that promote the provision of survival needs for all. As we become aware of distorted reciprocity, we may struggle to promote changes in socio-economic practices. Nevertheless, together with friends, ways to actively reshape power relationships and to achieve positive reciprocity within current contexts can be sought.<sup>106</sup>

## CONCLUSION

This essay has affirmed genuine reciprocity (friendship's "basic act"),<sup>107</sup> as integral to life in community, and to community obligations to the poor. Genuine reciprocity emerges as central both in the traditional relationships of agrarian peasants and in the civic friendship which Amos and Deuteronomy depict as foundational to a covenantal way of life.

Whilst poverty is clearly a complex and multi-faceted social phenomenon, its presence indicates negative reciprocity. Amongst the various interrelated factors that exacerbated poverty within Iron Age II Israel, we find reciprocity that has become distorted and destructive, both within the context of the marketplace, and within the context of patron-client relationships.

Using the concept of reciprocity, this imbalance is condemned within Amos and outlawed within Deuteronomy. The Deuteronomic

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<sup>104</sup> Ellithorpe, "Towards a Practical Theology of Friendship," 145.

<sup>105</sup> Simone Weil, "Friendship," in *Waiting for God* (New York: HarperCollins, 1951), 135–136. Gilbert Meilaender, *Friendship: A Study in Theological Ethics*, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 17; Wadell, *Friendship and the Moral Life*, 97–119.

<sup>106</sup> This is encouraged within an Aotearoa New Zealand Māori context by Maria Bargh, "Introduction," in *Resistance: An Indigenous Response to Neoliberalism*, ed. Maria Bargh (Wellington, NZ: Huia, 2007), 17–18.

<sup>107</sup> Allen, *Talking to Strangers*, 131.

reformers and editors advocate for practices that nurture positive reciprocity, foster fairness, reduce misery, and remove the tyranny of debt. They remind the covenant community they are to image God in care, compassion, befriending, and the promotion of justice.

The destructive impact of distorted reciprocity continues to be evident within contemporary contexts, with neoliberalism fostering conditions for the accumulation of power and capital by the economic elites, who prosper at the expense of the poor. The market permeates our lives; it is the market rather than civic friendship that shapes our social imagination. Indeed, civic friendship is rarely acknowledged, and friendship is regarded as a recreational rather than a socio-political or socio-economic relationship, and thus of little relevance to community. Contemporary conceptions of friendship are narrow, focused as they are on relative similarity and equality.

Yet these ancient texts offer new possibilities, with their focus on positive reciprocity that is first and foremost grounded in God's love and friendship. Distorted reciprocity is not an inevitable aspect of societal and economic change. Rather, these texts call for the imaging of God through civic friendship that recognizes the dignity of all. All are called to contribute to the flourishing of the broader community, through attentiveness to the appropriate reciprocity of their own practices, through the pursuit of justice, and through empathy towards and action on behalf of the marginalized *other*. **M**

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